



NEWS RELEASE

Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests & Thunder Basin National Grassland

Date: July 28, 2009

Contact Melissa Martin
307-745-2371
mmmartin@fs.fed.us

Forest Service and BLM Crack Down on Vandalism

(Douglas, Wyo.) July 28, 2009 - - Destruction of a public outhouse at the Weston Hills Recreation Area has forced the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to close the area until August 24, 2009, according to Douglas District Ranger Robert Sprentall. "The closure is being enforced to protect resources from further damage, to protect public health and safety, and to assist in the ongoing investigation of the incident," said Sprentall.

The Weston Hills Recreation Area, popular for hunting, hiking, and ATV-riding, is located 35 miles north of Gillette, Wyoming, on the west side of Highway 59. The area, which consists of 9,000 acres of BLM-administered lands adjoining the Thunder Basin National Grassland, is jointly managed with the USDA Forest Service.

"It's unfortunate to witness the disrespect that some people have for public property. We've invested a lot of time and energy over the last several years trying to spruce up this area and make it more enjoyable for the public," Sprentall said.

The outhouse, whose doors and windows were blown off in June of this year from a make-shift explosive, has had a history of vandalism. In 2004, just one month after its installation, Forest Service personnel began noticing a peppering of bullet holes across the outhouse walls. By 2007, it was so riddled with bullet holes that extensive restoration work was required. "The outhouse looked like something you'd see in film footage from a war scene. It was in really bad shape," said Marcia Rose-Ritchie, Recreation Planner for the Douglas Ranger District.

In hopes of deterring the recurring vandalism at the Weston Hills Recreation Area, the Douglas Ranger District stepped up their law enforcement and public education efforts in 2007. They also implemented a shooting restriction to prevent people from using firearms during non-hunting seasons.

Rose-Ritchie said that the measures taken to reduce the vandalism were successful up until this latest incident. "It was really exciting to see our efforts paying

***Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, Thunder Basin National Grassland
2468 Jackson Street, Laramie, Wyoming 82070
<http://www.fs.fed.us/mrnf/news.htm>***

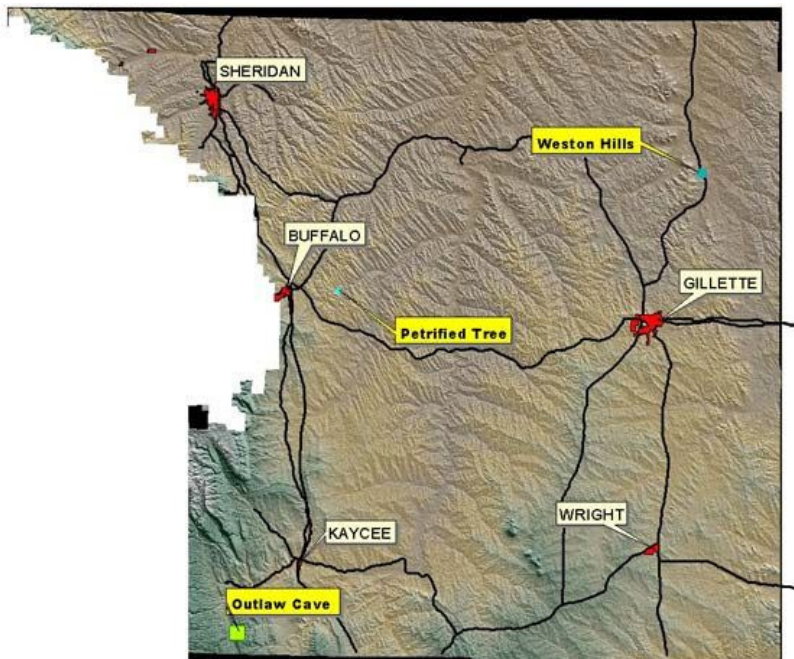
off. People were adhering to the shooting restriction and being respectful of the area. It makes it that much more disheartening to see the damage again,” said Rose-Ritchie.

J.R. Riggins, President of the Motorized Recreation Council (MRC) of Wyoming and avid user of the Recreation Area expressed his disappointment in the latest act of vandalism. “It’s unfortunate that this area has turned out to be a magnet for bad ideas and bad behaviors,” said Riggins. “We try to keep our members educated about situations like this. We figure that if people get a sense of ownership in an area like Weston Hills, that things like this won’t keep happening. We’ve had some successes, but there’s still work to be done.”

The MRC of Wyoming was established in 2003 to improve, maintain, and monitor recreation opportunities for responsible OHV use.

Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management law enforcement officers are currently working with Campbell County law enforcement officers on the vandalism investigation. “I am very thankful for these outstanding officers and their combined efforts,” said District Ranger Robert Sprentall.

To report vandalism or any other management issues at the Weston Hills Recreation Area, call your local Forest Service office at (307) 358-4690 or Bureau of Land Management office at (307) 684-1100.



Weston Hills Recreation Area

#####